

The "NET" BUSINESS WATCH

A QUICK CHANGE ARTIST HAS HIT LINCOLN

(as they periodically do!)

Lincoln has recently had several commercial businesses become victims of a quick change artist. The person is going into stores, presenting a handful of cash, and then asking for two \$100 bills to put with his mother's birthday card. In some cases, the clerk has laid out the two \$100 bills before taking and counting his money. The quick change artist then counts out the money shorting the clerk. Another tactic is to give the clerk the money and take the two \$100 bills. He then turns around and tells the clerk that they gave him \$110- not \$200. In one incident, the clerk then gave the person another \$100 bill. In yet another scenario, the person buys an inexpensive item with a \$100 bill and then wants his change in different denominations than what the clerk gave him. The "Quick Changer" manipulates the money very quickly, trading bills back and forth, so the clerk doesn't take the time to count the money and becomes very confused. Not all businesses contacted by the person lost money. At one store, the person stated that the clerk had shorted him money. The clerk then simply said that they would have to count their cash drawer to make sure he was shorted. The person then left, not waiting for the drawer to be counted.

Ways to prevent becoming a victim of a quick change artist:

When returning change to a customer count the money back as you give it to them. For example, they purchase an item for \$6 and give you a \$20 bill. You start with the amount of the purchase and then you count out for each \$1 you give them 7, 8, 9, 10 and then you give them a \$10 bill to make the twenty. Then you know exactly how much you gave to the customer. When I was a cashier(way back when), we always had to count the change back. Of course, we did not have registers that told us the amount to give back but it's still a good practice.

Make sure you count the money when it's handed to you, put it on the ledge of the register (above the cash drawer) or on top of the cash drawer and give the person their change. Then put the money in the cash drawer. If the person wants different denominations than you gave them, take their money, count it, put it on the ledge, and give them the bills they want, again putting the money in the drawer last. This way they can't say they gave you something they did not.

As mentioned above, if there is any question as to what money was exchanged, count the drawer.

The Key is to slow down the process, stay in control and complete one transaction before starting another.



SKIMMING DEVICES.....Another way to take your money

Skimming Devices are currently being used on the west & east coasts. I'm not aware of any reports of "skimmers" being used in Lincoln.

Skimming is the act of capturing cardholder data contained on the stripe of a credit , debit or ATM card. Individual scams vary and are not limited to any one type of business; however, restaurants and gas stations appear to be the most common locations. Here is a possible scenario: the customer uses a credit card to pay for dinner, the restaurant employee swipes the card through a small, concealed hand-held device to copy and store the account data. The stolen card information is later downloaded from the device into a computer. The information is then encoded on a counterfeit card or re-encoded on a lost/stolen card.

Most battery-operated skimming devices are no bigger than a pager, but they can read and store the magnetic stripe data from 200 to as many as 3200 accounts. The skimmer can then be attached to a P.D.A. (Palm Pilot) for data downloading.

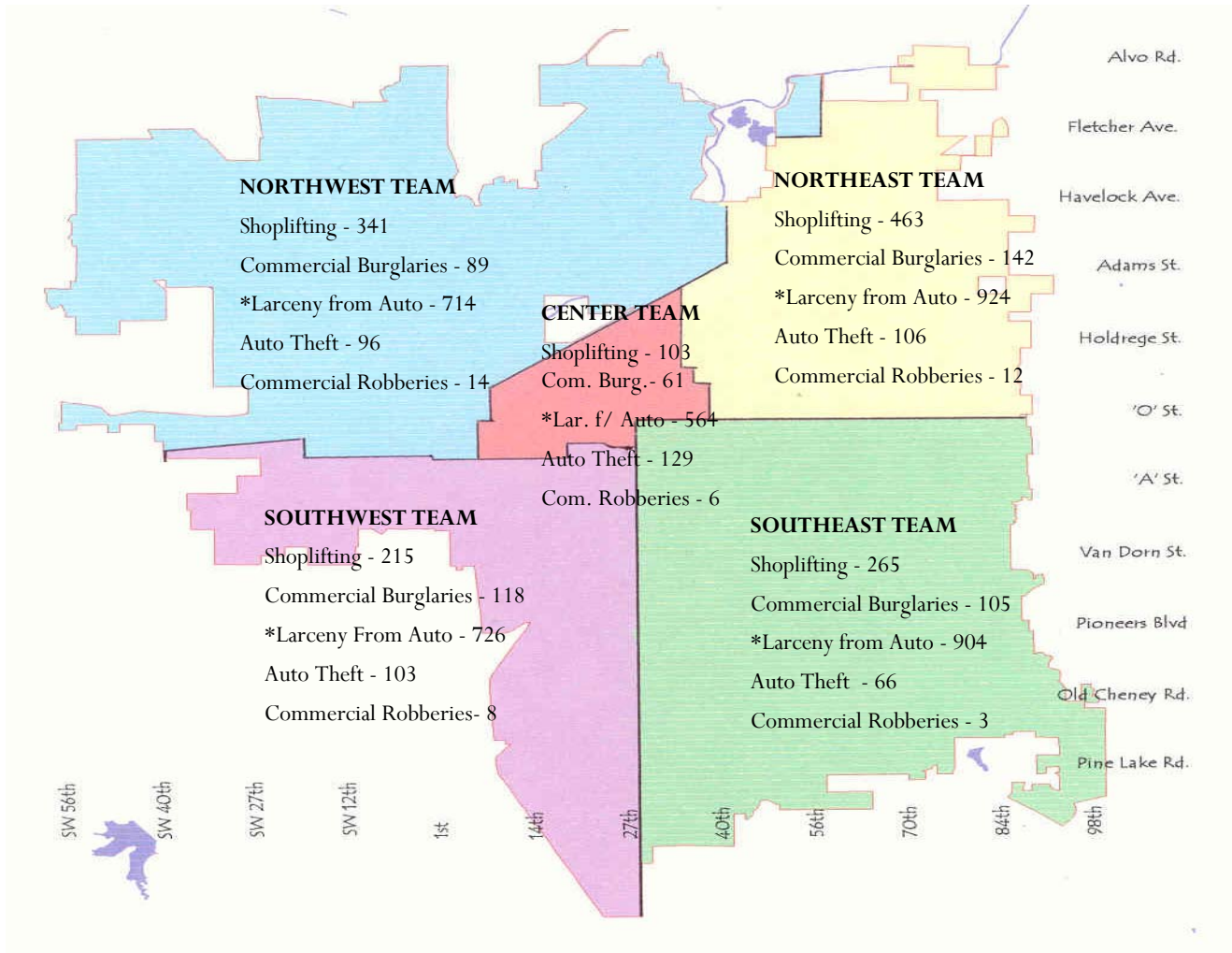
If you find an employee with a skimmer or find a skimmer attached to your cash register call the police immediately at 441-6000.



CRIME TRENDS

From 1-27-2002 to 12-9-02

For more information about the crime trends in your neighborhood go to the city web site. <http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/police>



* Larceny from auto is the city's most frequent and costly crime. The majority of the larcenies occur at people's residences. A lot of the larcenies could be prevented if citizens would take CD's, purses/billfolds, pull-out stereos, etc., out of their car when they park it for the night. At least put these items in the trunk so they are not visible.

WINTER DRIVING TIPS—TO MAKE SURE YOU CAN GET TO WORK

There are three factors to keep in mind when snowy road conditions hit the city. These three elements are **VISIBILITY, TRACTION AND DRIVING STYLE**. Reduced visibility and traction are the primary factors that often make winter driving much more difficult and challenging. It is the driving style you adopt in dealing with those factors that will determine how well you cope with the hazards of winter, and those provoked by other drivers. Prepare your car for winter driving, check the tread on the tires and also check the windshield wipers. Visibility is one of the most important things to consider when the road conditions are snowy or icy. Drivers should clear all snow and ice from the all windows and head/tail lights. Also clear off the wiper arm and blade, and the window washer nozzles. Remove the snow from the hood particularly at the ventilation intake grate that is usually at the base of the windshield. The intake grate allows air into the vehicle's ventilation system that allows the defrost feature to clear any frost that accumulated inside the car.



Being able to maintain traction on snowy and icy roads is another important consideration. The most important thing to do is to **DRIVE SMOOTHLY**. Do not make any sudden or abrupt movements - no sudden turns, no harsh acceleration or braking. If the road is wet, snowy or icy, a sudden change in movement will cause a loss of traction and the vehicle will go into a slide or a spin. If the vehicle does go into a slide, back off the accelerator immediately and then push smoothly and gradually on the brake pedal. If the vehicle has the anti-lock braking feature it will engage and assist in braking smoothly without locking up the wheels. If your vehicle does not have anti-lock brakes then you should gently pump the brakes to slow the vehicle and stop the slide. If your vehicle begins to spin, back off of the accelerator immediately and then turn your steering wheel in the same direction as the rear of vehicle is beginning to spin. Continue to slow down until control of the vehicle is regained.

Keep your sight far enough ahead of you to see where you want to go. This will help to smooth out your steering. When accelerating, gently push the pedal. Once the vehicle is rolling, you can increase the pressure on the pedal. The same applies when braking, gently at first, then increase pedal pressure progressively as you begin to slow down. It is a good practice to separate your acceleration, braking and steering so you do only one at a time. Brake before you start to turn a corner, steer through the corner at a safe speed, and then accelerate again when you straighten out of it. When you know you are going to have stop, plan ahead and give yourself plenty of room to stop. Remember, light touch on the brake and then increase the pressure. Put two to three car lengths between you and the vehicle ahead in case you or they lose control of the vehicle.

Driving on snowy or icy roadways requires you to keep looking and thinking well ahead. Plan for future turns and stops and anticipate what the traffic in front of you is doing. Care and planning should help you avoid those wintry accidents.

Remember, when they are forecasting snow during the night, set your alarm to get up earlier to allow for cleaning your car off (if it's parked outside), also allowing for more travel time. We want you to arrive to work safely and on time.



OFFICER'S PERSEVERANCE PAYS OFF

Officer Steve Wetzel distinguished himself with his investigatory skills on a multiple states and agencies fraud investigation. Officer Wetzel received a report from a business in Lincoln that their employees had taken part in a trade show in Las Vegas. Upon returning to Lincoln, they were contacted over the phone by the suspect who wished to purchase \$7,000 of equipment for which he would be sending a cashier check. This transaction was completed, the merchandise was shipped, and the business received a check. The suspect then called the business again wishing to make another purchase of equipment valued at \$1,700. When the second check was received, the employees determined that it and the previous check were both counterfeits.

Armed with only a P.O. Box in Las Vegas, Officer Wetzel went to work contacting the Las Vegas Police Department Fraud Unit, the District Attorney's Office, the Postal Inspector, the Secret Service, Union Bank and Mail Boxes Etc. personnel. After much additional work and convincing, a sting operation was set up in Las Vegas and the person responsible in Officer Wetzel's case was apprehended. The suspect, who was a fugitive from Florida, had over \$50,000 of stolen property from other scams in his possession, and had most of the property that had been stolen from the Lincoln business.

Using characteristic investigatory diligence, Officer Steve Wetzel brought together federal, Nevada and Nebraska agencies to gain the apprehension of this career criminal. Stolen property was returned and federal charges were brought against the suspect in this complex case. Great job Officer Wetzel!

THE "NET" BUSINESS

**LINCOLN POLICE DEPARTMENT
CRIME PREVENTION GROUP
575 S. 10TH St.
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508**

***Return Service
Requested***

THANKS FOR THE COURAGE TO GET INVOLVED

The Lincoln Police Department would like to thank Virginia Wright for being instrumental in the arrest of three people for shoplifting at Westfield Shopping Town and the recovery over \$20,000 in merchandise. Virginia Wright was volunteering her time ringing bells for the Salvation Army during the Holiday season. She became suspicious when she notice three people walk past her several times carrying bags full of merchandise. Each time the bags were taken to a van, placed inside, and the people then returned to the store to collect more merchandise. She got a description of the suspicious persons and also a description and license number of the vehicle. Ms Wright then called the police department to report her suspicions. The people left before the police arrived but Ms Wright was able to give officers their direction of travel. Responding officers called a traffic stop with the vehicle a short time later. All three persons were in the van along with the merchandise. Thanks again!



Retail Watch Nebraska

*committed to stopping meth
manufacturing in Nebraska*



The manufacturing of methamphetamine in Nebraska has greatly increased. The "Business Watch Program" is working in conjunction with the state "Retail Watch Program" to crack down on the manufacturing of methamphetamine. The businesses that sell products used for the manufacturing of methamphetamine should have already received a brochure on what to look for. We will be sending out Business Watch and Retail Watch stickers to put on your door to let the persons wanting to purchase the needed ingredients know that you will be watching. If you have any questions or if you did not receive the brochure please call Nancy Willemssen at 441-8294.